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INFO RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 0273  
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ APR 9382  
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA PRIORITY 6116  
RUEHZP/AMEMBASSY PANAMA PRIORITY 1524  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 001443

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TAGS: [MARR](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PTER](#) [CO](#)  
SUBJECT: POLICE ARREST SEVEN MILITARY OFFICIALS TIED TO  
CRIMINAL GROUPS AS WELL AS SIX CRIMINAL GROUP LEADERS

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SUMMARY  
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¶1. (SBU) In two different operations on April 16, the Colombian National Police (CNP) arrested seven military personnel tied to two criminal groups in Cordoba and Antioquia Departments. The military detainees included Lieutenant Colonel Alvaro Zambrano, commander of the Junin Battalion of the 11th Brigade, and Mayor Julio Parga, Commander of an anti-kidnapping unit attached to the 11th. The CNP also detained six criminal group members, including a former candidate for Governor of Cordoba and a former mid-level United Self-Defense Force of Colombia (AUC) commander. We halted assistance to the 11th Brigade in September 2007 due to human rights concerns. END SUMMARY.

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POLICE OPERATIONS UNVEIL MILITARY CONNECTIONS  
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¶2. (U) An April 16 operation by the CNP in Monteria, Cordoba against Los Paisas and Los Traquetos--two new criminal groups operating in southern Cordoba Department--led to the arrest of seven Colombian military personnel. The CNP arrested the commander of the Junin Battalion of the 11th Brigade, Lieutenant Colonel Alvaro Zambrano, as well as Major Julio Parga, Sergeant Jhonys Calderon, and four other soldiers. Major Parga commanded the anti-kidnapping unit (GAULA) attached to the 11th Brigade in Cordoba. Calderon and the four soldiers also served in the GAULA. The seven were allegedly cooperating with the two criminal groups, and face murder and conspiracy charges.

¶3. (U) Defense Minister Juan Manuel Santos said the Colombian military has a zero tolerance policy for military officials found guilty of criminal ties. He stressed that "the GOC has to be very clear that in trying to get rid of one monster, we avoid being converted into another type of monster, losing instead of winning, and reproducing exactly what we're trying to get rid of." Santos pledged the military's full cooperation with the Prosecutor General's Office (Fiscalia) in the case.

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SIX MEMBERS OF CRIMINAL GROUPS CAPTURED  
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14. (U) Also on April 16, the police captured six criminal leaders of Los Paisas and Los Traquetos criminal groups in the Uraba region of Antioquia and southern Cordoba. The six include Mario Prada Cobos, former mayor of Valencia and candidate for Governor of Cordoba; Francisco Javier Silva Vallejo (Julian), leader of Los Paisas; Walter Lozano Murillo (El Primo), member of Los Traquetos and cousin of former AUC leader Diego Murillo (Don Berna); and Salomon Feris (El Chavo or 08), a former mid-level AUC commander in Cordoba and brother of former Congressmen Jorge Luis Feris Chadid of Sucre. CNP Director General Naranjo and Prosecutor General Mario Iguaran told the diplomatic corps that the arrests were a major blow against new criminal groups in Cordoba and Antioquia. Naranjo said in the last 45 days, the CNP has also seized 370 weapons from criminal groups operating in this region.

15. (C) The arrests have yielded new information on mass graves, murders, narcotrafficking, and military complicity with new criminal groups in Cordoba and Antioquia. Major Parga was already under investigation by the Fiscalia for the alleged extrajudicial executions of five youth from Tolu Viejo in Sucre Department in July, 2007. Fiscalia Human Rights Director Sandra Castro told us in December that Parga was intimidating Fiscalia personnel. The Junin Battalion is also under investigation for extrajudicial killings of peasants. Lastly, the OAS Mission in Support of the Peace Process (MAPP/OAS) reported in February, 2007 that Feris Chadid (08) was continuing his criminal activities in Cordoba with the complicity of local military and police officials.

16. (U) Local daily El Tiempo reported that that Lozano Murillo (El Primo) of Los Traquetos was leading an effort by

Medellin-based narcotrafficking groups to seize control of narcotrafficking routes and coca fields in Cordoba, Antioquia (Uraba) and Sucre from former AUC mid-level commander Daniel Herrera Rendon (Don Mario), brother of former AUC leader Freddy Rendon (El Aleman). The struggle between the two narotrafficking groups reportedly began in mid-2007, and has led to numerous deaths and displacements in the region. On March 27, the CNP found eleven bodies, including two GAULA members, who had been killed execution-style in Uraba (Antioquia) by Herrera Rendon.

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USG ASSISTANCE TO 11th BRIGADE  
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17. (SBU) Due to human rights concerns, we halted any assistance to the 11th Brigade in September, 2007. We have also entered the names of the seven individuals under investigation into our human rights database.

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